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Unit .19

Session .04

Jesus is Dedicated

Scripture

Luke 2:21-38

21 When the eight days were completed for his
circumcision, he was named Jesus—the name given
by the angel before he was conceived. **22** And when
the days of their purification according to the law of
Moses were finished, they brought him up to Jerusalem
to present him to the Lord **23** (just as it is written
in the law of the Lord, **Every firstborn male will be
dedicated to the Lord**) **24** and to offer a sacrifice
(according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, **a
pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons**). **25** There
was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This
man was righteous and devout, looking forward to
Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him.
26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit
that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's
Messiah. **27** Guided by the Spirit, he entered the
temple. When the parents brought in the child Jesus
to perform for him what was customary under the law,
28 Simeon took him up in his arms, praised God, and
said, **29** Now, Master, you can dismiss your servant in
peace, as you promised. **30** For my eyes have seen your
salvation. **31** You have prepared it in the presence of
all peoples—**32** a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and glory to your people Israel. **33** His father and
mother were amazed at what was being said about him.
34 Then Simeon blessed them and told his mother
Mary: "Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall
and rise of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be
opposed—**35** and a sword will pierce your own soul—
that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."
36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, a daughter
of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well along
in years, having lived with her husband seven years
after her marriage, **37** and was a widow for eighty-
four years. She did not leave the temple, serving God
night and day with fasting and prayers. **38** At that very
moment, she came up and began to thank God and to
speak about him to all who were looking forward to the
redemption of Jerusalem.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Jesus is God's promise of hope to the nations.

Option 1

Imagine that you live in a country overseen by a monarchy. It can be set in whatever time period your students wish (present day, future, medieval period, you name it). The monarch has just had a child and that child is about to be publicly presented for the first time. Your students are the public relations team for the monarchy. They are tasked with overseeing the ceremony for the public presentation of the new prince/princess. Money is no object. What ceremony would they plan?

Split them into small groups (or solo) and ask each group to prepare a short pitch for their idea for the ceremony. What festivities, if any, would they have? What performances or speakers? Would they have a parade? Would they give gifts to the attendees? Declare a holiday?

Give them time to prepare their ideas, then to share them. See what ideas students think would be best.

Today's lesson will be about when Jesus is dedicated. God will ordain that Jesus is brought to the temple with the poorest sacrifice available to his financially-strained parents; the honored guests will consist of an old man and an old woman. How does Jesus' dedication line up with the expectations your students set out for their princes and princesses?

Option 2

Imagine your school/club was having a "Cool Kid Popularity Contest" (by the way, a popularity contest is probably a bad idea, but pretend it's happening for the sake of this activity). All students are mandated to take part, and the grand prize is a lot of money. Students get to share three things about themselves in a total of three sentences. Ask your students to think of and share what their three sentences would be (I'd suggest you have them write their sentences down).

Note: if you'd like to take some of the inclination to pride away from this activity, you can use this same scenario but tell the students they are to nominate their best friend; so instead of sharing three things about themselves, they are to share three things about their best friend.

Once students have shared their comments, ask what they think Jesus would share for His three sentences if He were in a popularity contest. In today's lesson, we'll see that God made at least three things clear at Jesus' dedication: that He is dedicated to the Lord's service, that He is the Messiah, and that He is exalted as the one to bring redemption.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 2:21-24.

Luke mentions Jesus' circumcision and naming to highlight Joseph and Mary's obedience to God's word. Their obedience to the commands of God sets the stage for the perfect obedience that their firstborn son, Jesus, will demonstrate in His life. In fact, every time they call His name, they are reminded of their obedience to God. Every time young Jesus heard His name, He was reminded of His name's meaning and thus His mission from God, to save His people from their sins. Therefore, in one verse (v. 21) Luke not only reveals that Jesus came to identify with God's people, but also that God identified Him as the Savior of His people. Thus, we see early on that God is in control of these events, and God's word will come to pass.

In the first four verses, Luke is able to set up the following events in such a way that Jesus is tied into the entire history of the people of Israel. First, Jesus was presented as being a descendant of Abraham. However, we know from the entirety of the New Testament witness that Jesus wasn't just a child of Abraham; He is the promised seed of Abraham to bring blessing to the entire world (Gal. 3:16). Second, Jesus' consecration to the Lord following the law of Moses demonstrated that Jesus was born under the law. Even more, we also understand that Jesus was born to fulfill the law of Moses on behalf of God's people (Matt. 5:17-20). The stage was set to proclaim the identity of this child. As we will see, Jesus was the long-awaited Savior of the world.

- **What does it say about God's character that He kept His promise to Abraham after all of those years?**

Read Luke 2:25-32.

In verses 26-28, we learn that by the sovereign providence of God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Simeon was led into the temple where he would meet Jesus. Simeon had waited his whole life for this moment. Up until this point he was restless, yearning for the comfort and salvation of his people. And then, at last, the Christ-child was handed to him. In this one breathtaking moment, all of his longings were fulfilled; he held the life of the world in his arms. It is perhaps no coincidence that Simeon's name means "God has heard."

- **How do you think Simeon felt during this moment?**

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 32, DDG)

God is Faithful

God's faithfulness means He keeps His word and always fulfills His promises (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:19). God's faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The apostle Paul linked the attribute of "faithful" to God's coming through on His word: "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). We reflect God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus is God's promise of hope to the nations.

Luke 2

21-24. Luke's narrative is carefully crafted so that the attentive reader can uncover the riches tucked away in his concise account.

In the Old Testament it was customary for infant males among God's people to be circumcised on the eighth day. This followed the pattern set in Genesis 17:12 when God commanded Abraham to perform this religious rite to all Israelite boys. Luke notes this in passing, but it is important because it tells the reader that Jesus was born under the law and therefore identifies with God's people (Gal. 4:4).

This is important to remember, as one continues to read. In the same verse, Luke recalls that a messenger of God gave to Joseph and Mary the name Jesus, a name that means "Yahweh saves," for their child. Matthew 1:21 states the significance of this name: "he will save his people from their sins." The first thing we see in Luke 2:21 is that Joseph and Mary demonstrate their obedience to God by naming the baby "Jesus," just as the angel had commanded them in Matthew 1. As Jesus grows, He will also demonstrate his obedience to the Father's mission to seek and save the lost.

The purification or consecration involved offering performing certain rites at the temple, namely, offering a lamb, a pair of doves or two young pigeons (Lev. 12:8). The lamb was to be a burnt offering and the turtledoves or pigeons a sin offering. If the family could not afford a lamb, one bird for each offering was permissible. In Luke's account, the option of offering a lamb is not mentioned in order to emphasize the lowly state of Jesus' family. This is important, because Jesus came to the lowly (Luke 1:52; 4:18-19; 6:20).

It is then mentioned that after the time of purification, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to Jerusalem to consecrate Him to the Lord. Jesus' dedication to the Lord is tied to the Mosaic law's instruction concerning the firstborn (Ex. 13:2). This dedication is meant to highlight that their son truly belongs to God. Just how much Jesus belongs to God will become clear as Luke's account continues, and Joseph and Mary will slowly come to understand this truth as Jesus grows into His identity and mission.

In Defense (p. 34, DDG)

"The title Lord Jesus Christ summarizes all of His redemptive work. Lord describes His sovereign deity; Jesus (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Yeshua; "God Saves") describes His saving death and resurrection; Christ ("anointed one") describes Him as the King who will defeat God's enemies and rule over the redeemed earth and the eternal state."[1]

TEACHING PLAN

The guiding of God's providence, and the prophetic utterance under the power of the Holy Spirit provided a solemn foundation for the events recorded in this text. Jesus was recognized as the Lord's Messiah from an early age. In light of this truth, Simeon rejoiced in the rest of God's fulfilled promises.

This is important for several reasons. First, like Simeon, all people who encounter Jesus as Christ can rest in the confidence that He provides the hope and salvation we all long for. At the same time, we can rest in confidence that our understanding of Jesus as the Christ, like Simeon's, is a gift of the Holy Spirit. We have all been led to Christ in God's providence. We have all had our eyes opened by the Holy Spirit to see Jesus, as He truly is—our only hope of salvation.

- **Recall how you were led by God's providence and Spirit to come to faith in Jesus. How did the Holy Spirit open your eyes and heart to Jesus?**

Read Luke 2:33-38.

Simeon turned to Mary and declared that this child would cause the rise and fall of many in Israel. Jesus has come to lift the humble and bring down the self-righteous. We understand through the entirety of Luke's account that though Simeon accepts Jesus in his arms with joy, many in Israel would reject him in their hearts (Isa. 8:14-15).

In addition, Luke introduces the second witness to these events, a prophetess named Anna (which means "grace"). Luke notes that Anna was well advanced in age. This seasoned saint had a prophetic role in this event, and her exemplary piety indicates that she was another reliable witness. The widow, Anna, holds forth a beautiful depiction of single-minded devotion to God, for we are told that she was devout and "did not leave the temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayers" (Luke 2:37).

Just like Simeon, Anna praised God and began speaking about Christ as the redemption of Jerusalem to all the people around her. Not only is this instructive for our evangelism, it is instructive for our worship as well. Worship is first and foremost something of the heart and extends to all areas of life. The aim and focus of worship is God, giving Him the exact due of praise and glory He deserves.

- **What are some areas in your life where you tend to forget that the purpose is to bring God glory? What usually happens when we forget that each aspect of life is worship?**
- **If the aim and focus of worship is God, how does this change the way we worship God with others through song at church?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus is God's promise of hope to the nations.

Luke 2

25-32. This announcement was not only good news for Simeon; it is also good news to all people—both Jews and Gentiles. In fact, Luke is possibly using a Greek word for the temple that indicates that Simeon was in the Court of the Gentiles. Therefore, the reader is to understand that Jesus is the fulfillment of the longings of all people. He is a light (revelation) to the previously dark world of the Gentiles and also the glory of God manifested as the promised hope among the Israelites. In this moment of praise, Simeon proclaimed the coming universal dimension of Jesus' redemptive work. God is demonstrating that salvation has come to all nations in Jesus Christ.

33-38. As we watch this scene play out before our eyes in the text of Scripture, Luke focuses on the response of Joseph and Mary. Jesus' parents were amazed; in fact they marveled as revelations concerning their beloved son continue to unfold.

Activity

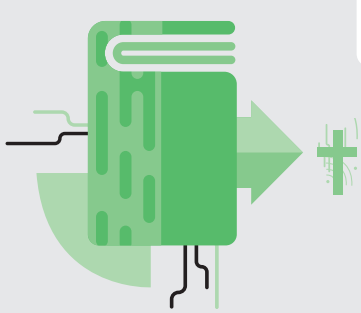
Ask your students to think of a friend who is or has been in a difficult situation (they can think of more than one if they wish). Ask them, if they are willing, to share in broad, general terms the difficulties their friends are facing (no specifics: we don't want to reveal anything personal). List those difficulties on the board (e.g., a friend who feels betrayed, a friend whose parents are fighting, a friend with esteem issues). Split your students into small groups, and assign each group a situation from your list.

Explain that a large part of Jesus' dedication was when Simeon and Anna recognized Jesus for who He is and declared His praise. Each group is to compose a skit or a comic strip depicting how they can declare who Jesus is in the difficult situation they've been assigned. They should try to share Jesus in ways that line up with the lesson: how can they show the person in difficulty that Jesus is the Messiah? How can they show that Jesus will bring redemption to the broken situation in which their friends find themselves? How does Jesus' dedication to the Lord's service bring good news to the difficult situations of our friends? Consider, in particular, how Jesus' death on the cross culminates His dedication to God's service, His being the Messiah, and His accomplishing redemption. How can students use the cross to minister in their situations?

Give students time to prepare their skits or comics and then to share them. Debrief any helpful patterns or themes you saw. Pray for the Spirit to work through them to declare Jesus like Simeon and Anna did.

(p. 33, DDG) Christ Connection

Simeon praised God when he saw Jesus, recognizing Him as the consolation of Israel for which he had longed. Simeon also prophesied that many would oppose Jesus. Jesus came to His own, however, His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God (John 1:11-12).



JESUS IS DEDICATED
Jesus is God's promise of hope to the nations.

JESUS CONNECTION
Simeon praised God when he saw Jesus because He recognized Him as the long-awaited fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that, though many would reject Him, Jesus was the ultimate hope, not only of Israel, but of all who would receive Him (John 1:11-12).

LIFEWISE QUALITY
HOPE – Expecting God will do what is best in every situation.

HEAD
Having hope is about what we expect God to do, but it isn't always easy to have hope when we have to wait for God to work. How long had Simeon and Anna waited for the promised Messiah? How did God increase Simeon and Anna's hope as they waited?

What effect do you think seeing God's promised Messiah had on Simeon and Anna's hope? How might their response to Jesus that day have given hope to people in the temple?

HEART

God first promised to send a Savior to defeat sin and Satan in the Garden of Eden. God promised the people a Messiah for hundreds of years before He sent Jesus. God's people waited, expecting that God would send the Savior at the right time. Some continued to hope, like Simeon and Anna, while others became discouraged. Why can it be discouraging when God doesn't answer prayer or do what He has promised right away?

When God promises something, He always does what He says. Not only that, but He encourages us and reminds us of these promises and He fulfills them at exactly the right time. How can this fact give you hope?

HANDS

Without hope, people will become discouraged and can even fall into despair. But hope grows when we encourage each other with uplifting words and the promises God has given us in the Bible. This week, when you see someone who is struggling, take the opportunity to encourage them (out loud or in a text or note) and to remind them of God's promises and character.